

11/25/72 An explanation other than I have suggested, a quite reasonable explanation, of Nixon's preference for Camp David over the White House for such things as the between-administrations conferences, is available. The "camp" is no longer what the word suggests. It is an elaborate installation, with more-than-adequate recreational facilities, color TV in each of the now numerous private cabins - even a pool hall - for the convenience of guests. This means that if the President invites those with whom he wants to confer, they need not cool their heels in an ante-room if he is delayed, may have their families with them and a more relaxed atmosphere, and the atmosphere for the President and with him is also less harried.... Sometimes when he is there and is going to stay there, his private helicopter is used for carrying others. When this happens, there is a pecking order. Nobody who doesn't have the rank dares sit in his personal chair. I have spoken to one who was on such a trip on which Ehrlichman was also a passenger. He was the last to get in the helicopter and all others had let the chair stay empty so he could use it. Ha rump!... There is also a hierarchy of those who see him, from the few who do often and regularly down to the once-a-weeker to the once-a-monther to the less frequent.... He apparently gets much put on paper for him and reads with great diligence, appearing to master the written words rather well. This is considered by even those not his partisans as hard work... The dominating characteristic of those close to him appears to be aggressiveness. They will not answer congressional questions but will attack in their answers, even when it is not necessary and even at the known cost of making a record for which they will later be held to account. Caspar Weinberger is one good case of this. He is a lawyer who seeks always, even when there is no need, to keep everyone else on the defensive. To accomplish this he will talk about that of which he knows nothing with sublime confidence, even when there is no need to, and refuses to recognize that his words are recorded and will be quoted back to him. This can and does make much work for others who later have to defend his spontaneities... Despite the press reports to the effect that everyone in the administration above civil service ranks has been asked to submit his or her resignation, this is not true. ... HEW will soon be a larger spender of the tax dollar than even defense. It is completely unmanageable... Richardson is said to be the most expert manager in the administration... The Laird leaving-defense stuff is a carefully-designed leak, not an accident. HW